
Critical Revolutionary Pedagogy is Made by Walking: in a world where many worlds coexist

PETER McLAREN

*College of Educational Studies,
Chapman University, Orange, California, USA*

PETAR JANDRIĆ

*Department of Informatics and Computing,
Polytechnic of Zagreb, Croatia*

ABSTRACT This conversation is the first systemic attempt to capture Peter McLaren's ideas about the relationships between critical revolutionary pedagogy and virtuality. It introduces the main problems with educational postmodernism, explains Peter's return towards the Marxist-humanist trajectory, and addresses contemporary challenges to Marx's dialectical thought. It analyses global changes in the structure of production, and juxtaposes the mass society shaped by one-way media such as television with the network society shaped by bi-directional communication powered by the Internet. The conversation reveals critical potentials of ecopedagogy at the intersections between education and information and communication technologies and analyses the main messages from Ivan Illich. It explores the main features of the emerging digital cultures, identifies underlying values and ideologies, and links them to the divisions between the global South and the global North. It analyses distinct features of contemporary youth movements and revisits the emerging transformations of the concept of the state. It looks into the relationships between information and power, explores algorithmic regulation through technological innovation, and analyses various challenges pertaining to 'big data'. Finally, it provides a brief insight into Peter McLaren's *modus operandi* and his personal thoughts and feelings about information and communication technologies.

To anyone interested in contemporary critical education, Peter McLaren hardly needs an introduction. Dubbed as 'one of the leading architects of critical pedagogy' (Wikipedia, 2014), and 'a teacher of all teachers' (Steinberg, 2005, p. xiii), he is widely recognized as 'poet laureate of the educational left' (Kincheloe, 2000, p. ix). Henry Giroux writes that 'as a writer, he [McLaren] combines the rare gifts of the astute theoretician with that of the storyteller in the manner celebrated by Walter Benjamin' (1999, p. xxiii). On the back cover of *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture*, William F. Pinar wrote: 'McLaren's unerring sense of what is important as well as the remarkable range of his scholarship establish him as perhaps the central political theorist in the field today' (1995). Paula Allman (2000) describes McLaren's writing as follows:

McLaren's writing is a brilliant blend of passion, commitment, and critical analysis and insight. It is poetry and prose in an intimate dance that touches, at once, readers' hearts and minds.

McLaren's [*Che Guevara, Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of Revolution*] is ... one of the most important books on critical education, and thus also education and social justice, to have been written in the twentieth century.

Last but not least, Peter's friend Paulo Freire wrote:

Peter McLaren is one among the many outstanding 'intellectual relatives' I 'discovered' and by whom I in turn was 'discovered'. I read Peter McLaren long before I ever came to know him personally ... Once I finished reading the first texts by McLaren that were made available to me, I was almost certain that we belonged to an identical 'intellectual family'. (Freire, 1995, p. x)

Amongst numerous rewards, five books written by Peter have been winners of American Education Studies Association Critics Choice Awards, and his work has been the foundation for several dedicated institutions, including La Fundacion McLaren de Pedagogia Critica and Instituto Peter McLaren in Mexico and La Catedra Peter McLaren at the Bolivarian University in Caracas. At the time of proof-reading this article, a sixth expanded edition of Peter's award-winning book *Life in Schools: an introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education* has just been published by Paradigm Publishers (2014).

Peter is Distinguished Professor in Critical Studies at the College of Educational Studies, Chapman University, Emeritus Professor of Urban Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, Emeritus Professor of Educational Leadership at Miami University of Ohio, and Honorary Director of the Center for Critical Studies in Education at Northeast Normal University in China, where he also holds the position of Chair Professor. He has published forty-five books and hundreds of scholarly articles and chapters that have been translated into more than twenty languages, and his name has slowly but surely become almost synonymous with the contemporary project of critical education. Peter's academic work is blended with political activism. As he lectures all around the world and actively participates in various political struggles, Peter actively lives theory and practice of critical revolutionary pedagogy.

In this article, Peter discusses his ideas about the relationships between critical education and information and communication technologies with Petar Jandrić. Petar is an educator, researcher and activist. He has authored two books and various scholarly articles, book chapters and popular articles. Petar's work has been published in Croatian, English and Serbian. His current research interests are situated at the post-disciplinary intersections between technologies, pedagogies and society, and his ongoing projects are oriented towards collaborative research and editing. Petar worked at the Croatian Academic and Research Network, the University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art and the University of East London. Currently, he works as Senior Lecturer at the Polytechnic of Zagreb.

Petar Jandrić: Peter, thank you a lot for agreeing to this conversation. Please allow me to start with a brief overview of theoretical foundations. Your early work has been strongly influenced by postmodernism. For more than a decade, however, it has slowly but surely entered 'the Marxist-humanist trajectory' spanning from authors with various Marxist tendencies and the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School to the original works of Marx (McLaren et al, 2008). The shift from postmodern Peter to Marxist Peter has been elaborated fairly extensively – for instance, in conversations with Marcia Moraes and Glenn Rikowski published in *Rage and Hope* (2006). Could you please summarize it in few sentences?

Peter McLaren: One of the foundational social relations that interdicts a student's access to resources necessary to see the world critically is, I believe, class exploitation. An exploitation that despoils communities and dispossesses workers of their humanity. Education opposes schooling. Education is that which intrudes upon our instincts and instruments of mind and augments them; it pushes us our thoughts along the arcs of the stars where our thoughts can give rise to new vistas of being and becoming and to new solidarities with our fellow humans. Our responsibilities for creating critical citizens should be proportional to our privilege. Today a good education is no longer seen as a social responsibility but as picking carefully from an array of consumer choices provided by a number of new companies and corporations. We now offer endless arrays of remedies for new kinds of learning disabilities. Just take your pick. As early as the 1980s, I was asking myself: How do we react to the cries of help from the youth of today, whose full-throated screams meet the immemorial silence of the pedagogical tradition? An answer to this question mandated a move away from the ironic distantiation and self-indulgent detachment of the vulgar

divas of the academy who clearly chose identity politics over class politics (and in so doing became complicitous in the very relations of inequality they officially rejected) by a close reading of Marx and Marxist theorists, culminating with engaging the work of Marxist educators.

PJ: Departing from the Frankfurt School of Social Science, contemporary critical theories of technologies have developed in various directions (including, but not limited to, the elusive fields of postmodernism), and ended up quite far from their Marxist roots: nowadays, they seem stuck at the place which you left more than a decade ago. Could you please elaborate your return to Marxism as a theoretical base for reinvention of critical education in the context of information and communication technologies?

PM: Well, I began with an autonomous Marxist focus – the self-activity of the working class – and I was initially drawn to the work of important thinkers such as Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Raniero Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, Marirosa Dalla Costa, Francois Beradi, and others, although I didn't explicitly deal with their work in my writings on education. I moved towards an appreciation of more classical Marxist critique, the work of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, Teresa Ebert, for instance, then I became interested in the Marxist humanism of Peter Hudis, Kevin Anderson and Raya Dunayevskaya, and of course the work of British educators Paula Allman, Mike Cole, Dave Hill and Glenn Rikowski. So I began with an interest in what has been described as a new era of capitalist development that was variously described under the epithets 'post-industrialism', 'post-Fordism' or 'postmodern capitalism'.

Here the emphasis was on information age capitalism via information technologies – computers and telecommunications – used by capital to create capital mobility across national boundaries and eventually the national security state of widespread societal surveillance. Even though my many visits to Latin America convinced me that we have not in any way left the smokestack era of factory production, I became interested in the various ways that capital has penetrated the entire society by means of technological and political instruments in order to generate a higher level of productivity and in order to monitor and reconstitute its response to the self-organization of the working class through these new technologies. Of course, innovations in the context of knowledge production and communication in the new information society do not merely serve as instruments of capitalist domination, but can be employed in creating alternative and oppositional movements in the larger project of transforming capitalist society into a socialist alternative.

PJ: There has been a lot of water under the bridge since Marx developed his theories. Could you briefly address some contemporary challenges to his dialectical thought?

PM: I am critical of autonomous Marxists such as Hardt and Negri who, in books such as *Empire* (2001), argue that the multitude, who have amassed the necessary 'general intellect', are now in place as a web of resistance to capitalism – and they have done so simply by refusing to reproduce capitalism, without any unifying philosophy of praxis. Marxist-humanist theorist Kevin Anderson correctly sees this as a rejection of transcendence in favor of immanence (i.e. a rejection of Hegel). He writes:

This gaping flaw in *Empire* is rooted in the type of philosophical outlook they have embraced, one that radically rejects all forms of what they term transcendence in favor of staying on the plane of immanence, i.e., taking elements within the given social reality as one's point of departure ...

But we do not have to choose between such one-sided alternatives. Consider Hegel's standpoint, as summed up by Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School: 'To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel's polemic against Kant' (Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 31). In fact, Hardt and Negri regularly attack Hegel and the Enlightenment philosophers as conservative and authoritarian, while extolling pre-Enlightenment republican traditions rooted in Machiavelli and Spinoza. What they thereby cut themselves off from is the dialectical notion that a liberated future can emerge from within the present, if the various forces and tendencies that oppose the system can link up in turn with a

theory of liberation that sketches out philosophically that emancipatory future for which they yearn.

Marx certainly overcame the pre-Hegelian split between immanence and transcendence. The working class did not exist before capitalism and was a product of the new capitalist order, and was therefore immanent or internal to capitalism. At the same time, however, the alienated and exploited working class fought against capital, not only for a bigger piece of the pie, but also engaged in a struggle to overcome capitalism itself, and was in this sense a force for transcendence (the future in the present). (Anderson, 2010, pp. 11-12)

Here we see, as with Habermas, a rejection of all forms of radical transcendence and a refusal to conceptualize dialectically an alternative to capitalism. As Anderson notes, doing so inspires a fear of utopianism, or worse, authoritarianism and colonial hubris. For Habermas, Hardt, Negri and Holloway, there appears to be a fear of the Promethean side of Marx's humanism that, Anderson notes, points towards transcendence of the given. Thus, in the case of Habermas, we return to a reformist liberalism, and Hardt and Negri are moving towards a poststructuralist radicalism.

The solution, as Anderson proposes, is to 'stare negativity in the face' (to cite Hegel), and work within a variegated dialectical that takes into consideration race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality and youth. We cannot just refuse to take state power, as John Holloway and others recommend, since the state with its pernicious logic of domination will continue to exist until we have created a new social order, one that consists of freely associated labor on a world scale.

The Neighbourhood Has Just Become More Interesting

PJ: Nowadays, concepts such as 'post-industrialism', 'post-Fordism', 'postmodern capitalism' and 'information society' are often merged into an over-arching concept of Manuel Castells' (2001) and Jan van Dijk's (1999) *network society*. One of the main differences between the industrial society and the network society lies in the structure of production: the first is predominantly based on production of physical artefacts, while the latter is predominantly based on production of knowledge. This brings us to the notion of knowledge economy, where hordes of information workers produce added value from juggling invisible and intangible bits and bytes. Certainly, it is hard to deny that you and I, teachers at universities from two different continents, have chased tiny immaterial lights on our screens in order to produce tangible value in the form of this printed interview. And we are not exceptions – as contemporary industry mercilessly reduces its workforce, virtuality is faced with a flood of 'immigrants' who exchange production of physical artefacts for production of concepts and ideas.

Certainly, those trends are closely linked with historically embedded and economically entrenched social relationships. Theoretically, virtual immigrants have more chance of obtaining decent online jobs than clandestine immigrants from North Africa on the isle of Lampedusa – at least they are legal. However, making money online is still a rare privilege of a small bunch of your neighbours in Silicon Valley, or a socially and economically conceived exception that merely confirms the stereotypical image of a poor immigrant (Guy Standing explores this in depth in his excellent books *The Precariat* [2011] and *A Precariat Charter: from denizens to citizens* [2014]).

On the one hand, Peter, we are obviously faced with dematerialization of economic activities. On the other hand, however, production of artefacts has no other choice but to closely follow the rise of worldwide population and its numerous lifestyles – as you previously said, 'we have not in any way left the smokestack era of factory production'. Obviously, those trends are closely related to issues of education and class. On that basis, Peter, could you please analyse the main contemporary changes in the structure of production?

PM: The knowledge society is premised on communication, on dialogue, on creating knowledge for the well-being of humanity. The knowledge economy, on the other hand, is interested in appropriating communication technology for the purpose of producing information that can be centralized, monitored, and controlled partially through the systematic deskilling of workers. In fact, the knowledge-based economy is really an illusion. When we can eliminate underemployment, then perhaps that term will have some real salience. We already have a highly educated workforce with plenty of skills. What we need is a massive redistribution of wealth in the

form of more jobs. So let's not be misled by all this talk about immaterial labor. Social exchanges are not equal, immaterial labor is not free of capital. Computers have not made us free and independent producers. Why are we even cooperating with generating high calibre human capital to corporations?

Glenn Rikowski recently put it thus: 'To become capital or to humanize our souls' (McLaren & Rikowski, 2000). I'd like to summarize some important points here made by Rikowski (McLaren & Rikowski, 2000). Human capital, as Marx pointed out, has become a condition of life in capitalist societies. The human is a form of capital and capital is a form of human life. While it is believed that competitive advantage comes from knowledge and innovation, knowledge workers are being exported all over the globe just like manual workers. The knowledge economy geared to employers' needs has narrowed the aims of education by marginalizing critical inquiry and skills. In fact, Rikowski goes so far as to note that education and training are actually a part of the knowledge economy, as higher education students from overseas bring in huge export earnings.

Capital, as Rikowski describes it, is a form of social energy, and is not self-generating. It depends upon our labor power which creates surplus value and then various forms of capital develop from this surplus value. Labor power produces immaterial as well as material commodities. Labor power is the most explosive commodity on the world market today, Rikowski points out, and education and training set limits upon the social production of labor powers, preventing the development of those powers that can break the chains imposed by the value-form of labor. In order to change ourselves, to reinvent ourselves, to decolonize our subjectivities forged in the crucible of capitalism, we need to transform the social relations that sustain our capitalized life-form.

PJ: Jan Van Dijk juxtaposes *the network society* with its predecessor – *the mass society* – and links them with characteristics of the supporting media. Pre-digital media of the mass society, such as radio and television, support one-way communication between centres of power and peripheries: the chosen few perform and talk, while the rest of the population watches and listens. In contrast, the network society is associated with multi-directional digital social and media networks, and 'individuals, households, groups and organizations linked by these networks' (van Dijk, 1999, p. 24). Using the lingo of information sciences, technologies of mass society enable one-to-many communication while technologies of the network society provide many-to-many communication.

Another important difference between the two generations of technologies lies in their scope. Back in the 1980s, my parents' home was packed with many different one-purpose devices: radio, television, cassette player, vinyl record player, Walkman, telephone, photo camera, video camera ... and many of the devices could be found in multiples. Technologies of the mass society maintain firm borders between various media – cassettes cannot be reproduced on a TV set, and a Walkman cannot play vinyl records. They were made to last – as can easily be seen from the example of the audiophile scene, once you entered the world of vinyl records, you were stuck there for years and decades.

Technologies of the network society, on the contrary, are conceptually universal. The computer is 'a medium of the most general nature' (Carr, 2011). Any form of analog information can be digitalized, processed, and delivered in essentially the same way and using the same chip-set. In spite of the apparent diversity of things that can be done by computers, information and communication technologies have brought the great unification of human activities – contemporary work, communication and entertainment are all done using exactly the same hardware powered by different software. The mass society had been based on many technologies designed for specific and limited purposes, while the network society is based on adaptations of one technology for many different purposes. This is a mere outline of this complex topic – more about differences between various generations of media can be found in the very important book *The Shallows: what the internet is doing to our brains* written by Nicholas Carr (2011).

There is something general about all technologies – despite obvious novelties contained in each generation of media, their dialectical relationships with the society are deeply historical and embedded in human nature. Therefore, I find van Dijk's juxtaposition between technologies of the mass society and technologies of the network society very important, and suggest that we should kick off the discussion about digital media of today by analysing their most influential analog predecessor – television.

PM: I have always appreciated the work of Joyce Nelson, especially her book *The Perfect Machine* (1991), which reveals the ideological collusion between the television industry and the nuclear state in their quest for the perfect technological imperative: efficiency. Nelson undresses the relationship between the advance of television and defense contractors and the arms industries such as General Electric, DuPont and Westinghouse. I grew up in the 1950s, and we were one of the first families to own a TV because my dad started selling TVs when he returned from fighting the Nazis after World War II. Little did my father know that he was peddling the technological unconscious of our culture – a technological unconscious rooted in the nuclear unconscious.

Television is the eye of our unconscious, like the Eye of Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 2012) – it colonizes our subjectivity, works through our organs of irrationality. It replaces the messy flesh of our bodies (which we secretly wish to discard) with the flesh of our dreams – it remakes us by re-valoring the masculine self of conquest and control and allows us to live what is unmanageable and uncontrollable outside our heads inside our heads where we can stage-manage reality. We look to technology as we would to religion, for our salvation. It is the mirror in which we hope to find our perfection reflected back at us through our acquisition of universal knowledge, knowledge lost when we were supposedly thrown out of the Garden of Eden by God. David Noble has written on this theme with considerable insight and aplomb (see, for instance, his book *Digital Diploma Mills* [2001]).

I mention the nuclear unconscious here, reflecting on an article done decades ago by Dean MacCannell (1984), who shed some light on the founding of the American comprehensive high school, in particular, the connection between the founding of the comprehensive American high school and the Cold War. I mentioned this in a previous exchange with Glenn Rikowski published in my book *Rage and Hope* (2006). MacCannell's insights are interesting in uncovering the historical roots of racist schooling in the United States, and linking this with the nuclear unconscious present in the United States at that time. MacCannell links the politics of the Cold War and United States nuclear strategy – specifically post-Hiroshima strategic foreign policy – to what he calls the 'nuclear unconscious' that was instrumental in structuring urban education in the 1950s and 1960s. He sees educational policy as connected in an unconscious way to the doctrine of deterrence and the concept of limited survivability.

PJ: This story seems very interesting, and I am sure that our readers will enjoy a short digression. Could you please expand on it, Peter?

PM: Directly after World War II, the dominant thinking amongst US military strategists was that cities of over a million people were the only targets of sufficient economic value to warrant the use of atomic weapons. The United States believed that the Soviets would strike first, and many cities would be wiped out. Yet it was also believed that a sufficient number of people outside the cities would survive an attack and rebuild US society – and as we shall see, this would be white people. Rural white folks and those living in smaller cities outside the large metropolitan areas were those that were slated for saving the reigning values of free enterprise after a Soviet first strike. The cities would therefore be 'cured' of their officially designated social problems (crimes, disease and high mortality rate). The idea was that the city would absorb the attack so that damage minimally spilled over into surrounding 'survival areas' made up of predominantly white populations. To try to defend the cities by 'hardening' them would only intensify the attack, and it might spill over to white communities.

Along with the accelerating nuclear arms build-up in the 1960s came massive withdrawal of upper-to-middle-class white folks, including many of the intelligentsia, into small towns beyond the suburban fringe. In the 1970s and 1980s rural areas continued to grow at a more rapid rate than urban areas. As MacCannell (1984) points out, rather than moving towards a form of Euro-socialism, where minimal standards of living (housing, health care, income) would be created for impoverished ethnic communities, or opting for a renewed commitment to educational and legal justice, the United States began to warehouse its marginalized citizens in large cities. Interestingly, about this time, fiscal policies of public spending to increase investment and employment were replaced with monetary policies that regulated interest rates, moderated investment and accelerated layoffs. Harvard University President James Bryant Conant, who had been a member of

the secret National Defence Research Committee and had helped to target Hiroshima and Nagasaki – in particular, workers and their homes – became an influential educational reformer in the 1950s and early 1960s. In fact, he helped to create the public school system that we have today in the United States.

Conant's national-level involvement in planning the inner-city school curriculum advocated vocational education for Puerto Ricans and African Americans, and recommended school counsellor–student relationships on the model of the relationship of a probation officer to a parolee that extended four years after completion of high school. He also recommended public works projects to provide ghetto-based employment for black male youth. The idea, of course, was to keep them contained in the cities, which were expendable under the 'first strike' scenario. He questioned the relevance of having African Americans working on forest projects that would keep them out of the city. In fact, he was opposed to any program that would move black youth out of the city, even temporarily – such as those modeled on earlier programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps during the days of the Great Depression. Conant also argued that the private enterprise that was moving outside the city should not be responsible for the welfare of inner-city inhabitants whom he referred to as 'inflammable material'. He was against court-ordered busing to desegregate the public schools, even voluntary busing, and argued that ghetto schools must require students to 'rise and recite' when spoken to and suggested boys wear ties and jackets to school.

As MacCannell (1984) argues, we see the nuclear unconscious at work in Conant's vision of public schooling and public life. He placed the future hope in society's projected survivors (overwhelmingly white) who would live in small cities of populations of 10,000 to 60,000. When you examine the current decay and neglect of urban schools in the United States, some of this can be traced right back to Conant's reform measures for the comprehensive high school. Technology in the form of atomic weaponry could be used to 'purify' the cities of people of color while preserving white people in small cities close to agricultural lands.

PJ: Thank you for revisiting and expanding this fascinating story, Peter. So, what about television?

PM: We can see the advent of television as an ideological instrument to depress frontal lobe function. The frontal lobe organizes plans and sequences our behavior. It is fundamental for making moral judgements, for making discriminating assessments about what we see. We know, for instance, that computer games can cause a decrease in activity in the frontal lobes by overstimulating parts of the brain associated with movement and vision. The work of Marie Winn (2002) has been helpful in addressing the effect on the brain of viewers engaged in the new media landscape. There is the whole question of TV ownership and viewing times of children correlating with a decline in students' SAT tests.

Winn has drawn our attention to extensive television viewing and the effects on young children's verbal development (as distinct from the development of their visual or spatial abilities) and reading scores. Research into the negative effects of TV watching on academic achievement is quite compelling. There is some evidence to suggest that visual and auditory output actually damages the child's developing brain. According to some brain researchers, when we watch TV, our brain actually shuts off and we are neurologically less able to make judgements about what we see and hear on the screen. I am thinking of Dr Aric Sigman's work (2007) here on how television creates more separation between thought and emotion, and actually serves to enhance behavior conformity – TV then becomes a great medium of social control and social engineering. It's a perfect instrument for advertisers, it's capitalism's wet-dream machine. As long as you can prevent the fibres connecting the neurons in the frontal lobe from thickening through TV watching, you can create an entire generation of hive dwellers, with little self control, ready to be manipulated by television gurus and the propaganda machines of which they are a part.

One of my professors at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Dr Fred Rainsberry, who had a special interest in communication theory and curriculum development and was part of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, said that I should be working with Marshall McLuhan as part of my doctoral research, but the year I entered the program, in 1979, McLuhan suffered a stroke. I developed a children's television pilot, called *Kidding Around*, for the fledgling multilingual television station in Toronto at that time. The idea was to visit a different

ethnic part of the city each week and interview regular folks and get a sense of their life. We couldn't find any sponsors and the show never got past the pilot.

PJ: Could you link these pre-digital insights to contemporary information and communication technologies?

PM: As David Harvey (1990) and others have pointed out, computerization creates a compression of time/space through an acceleration of capital accumulation where accelerated turnover time in the process of capital accumulation and speedups in exchange and consumption help to produce superficial consumer needs through mass media (i.e., television advertising and the production of spectacles). We see ourselves as agents of change through these superficial commodities, which fester in our neoliberal bowels and are rapidly expelled in an uninterrupted flow to make room for more superficial commodities. Rather than producing durable goods and infrastructure for the public good, we are prone to the production of desire which replaces those very critical systems of intelligibility that could help us gain some critical purchase on what is happening to us. We become activists for types of cultural change that are dependent upon the very corporations that we rail against instead of agents for economic transformation that will produce the products and infrastructure necessary to help populations meet their needs rather than their digitally and electronically produced subjectivities – bodies without organs – that are nothing but what Alan Watts used to describe in the 1960s as 'bags of skin' (1966). We retreat into a politics of immanence while thirsting for a politics of transcendence. But a politics of transcendence would mean we would have to give up the security of our embeddedness in the very corporate commodity culture we supposedly are fighting against.

If everything is compressed into the surface of a decontextualized image then anything can be substituted for anything else. Revolutionaries are really just conformists, conforming to the desires of other revolutionaries, and it's better to become a conservative who seeks and finds pleasure in life than a humourless activist who suffers but makes some progress in creating a more just and equitable world. You are conditioned to think that a new cosmetic is as important as the crisis in the Ukraine. They are featured in the media as commensurate. We watch the millions who are addicted to the erotic costumes worn by Miley Cyrus and to her 'wardrobe malfunctions' that are done accidentally on purpose and we can marvel at the power of the media in creating celebrities to distract us from substantive political projects. Miley is not going to wake up one day as a Marxist and usher in a revolution. But when the pink slips come these admirers will be searching for another job in retail with no medical benefits. But they can still see themselves as transgressive cultural consumers as they head to the bread lines and soup kitchens.

Technological advances are functionally integrating us to the ideological circuits and global imperatives of the transnational capitalist class, prompting us to perform our identities according to the hidden transcript of the neoliberal agenda: to create consumer citizens through a comprador class cyber-citizenry who serve as sentinels that ensure the promulgation of a colonial mentality. In this way information technology serves to fire up the cauldron of domestic and political repression, to support the structural violence of capitalism and to habituate us into the service of empire. No longer do we need to fear being press-ganged into the service of the empire, we have become ideological products of our own manufactured internal restraint, thanks to the technological advances that we all have come to 'enjoy'. We are all Julian Assange, lecturing from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy.

PJ: In the network society, many occupations have undergone significant transformations – and the mass media have obviously been hit harder than the rest of us (Bird, 2009). Could you please look back and analyse the main developments in mass media during the past few decades? What happens to traditional press in the age of the network?

PM: Journalism used to be a way of citizens holding people in power accountable for their actions – and the storied Upton Sinclair is often cited as the prototypical muckraker. But those journalists are few and far between and their careers in the corporate media rarely last very long. As Sonali Kolhatkar (2014) has noted recently in a conversation with Glenn Greenwald, the mainstream media engage in attack pieces on people like Greenwald and Snowden in ways they would never

treat members of Congress. Greenwald and Snowden have become prominent examples of Orwell's 'thought criminals' (1949) and the public has been conditioned to view them as traitors to the United States.

I have long been of the opinion that Orwell's *1984* has been upon us for some time. At least since 2001, when the press became the echo chamber for Bush administration in its heinous call for war in Iraq. When the USA started to believe its own mythology as the world's eternally invincible superpower, incapable of decline, then *1984* was constructed out of the debris of the dead and fallen corpses of American jihad. When the USA came to believe and act upon the notion that it could reshape the world, however, it chose through the wrath of the greatest military force in history, then we were all doomed in this country as the green light was given to the NSA, to corporations to act with the same rights as 'religious people', for the government to hasten our extinction through policies that greatly enhance climate change, war, debt peonage that turns workers into wage slaves of the transnational capitalist class, and ecocide. It is a marker of the sophistication of the US media apparatus that many Americans still believe that they live in a country that exercises the freedom of the press. The press is free, of course. It is free to pursue the objectives and interests of the corporations that own the media outlets.

Even when there is a chance for reporters to investigate a story, other corporations jump into the act using bribery or whatever means available to purchase the silence of potential informants. Recently, for instance, a small town in Ottawa, Canada, will be receiving \$28,200 from energy company TransCanada Corp. in exchange for keeping silent about the company's proposed Energy East tar sands pipeline project, for five years. TransCanada has agreed to give Mattawa \$28,200, so that town can purchase a rescue truck. You now can rescue a body in danger but you have put your humanity in mortal danger. The Energy East pipeline proposal has the potential to generate 3 greenhouse gas emissions each year that is the equivalent of adding more than seven million cars to the roads (Atkin, 2014).

Digital Cultures and Ecopedagogy of Sustainability

PJ: In our high-tech society, everything is directly linked to questions concerning the environment. On that basis, the recently established movement of ecopedagogy brings ecology in relation to critical pedagogy. In 2007, you chaired the waiver committee for Richard Kahn's doctoral dissertation on the movement. Your book co-edited with J. Sandlin, *Critical Pedagogies of Consumption: living and learning in the shadow of the 'shopocalypse'* (2009), is extensively referenced as one of the key readings in the field. You wrote the preface for *Occupy Education* (2012), a book on ecopedagogy by Tina Lynn Evans – and I am completely sure that there are at least a few more contributions that managed to skip my attention. Could you please analyse potentials of ecopedagogy for our explorations of the critical encounter between education and information and communication technologies?

PM: I am not sure that I can give you a satisfactory answer with regard to ecopedagogy in terms of the critical encounter between education and information and communication technologies. After all, ecopedagogy is a relatively new sub-field of critical pedagogy – although I should be careful referring to it as a sub-field. But it is certainly a trajectory of revolutionary critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is becoming more committed to speaking to issues of socio-ecological sustainability and to sustainability oriented social change. With contributions from authors and activists such as Richard Kahn, Tina Evans, David Greenwood, Samuel Fassbinder, Sandy Grande and Donna Houston (to name just a few), the field of ecopedagogy is now on a potent trajectory. Bringing their contributions into conversation with the efforts of Vandana Shiva, Joan Martinez-Alier, Joel Kovel, Jason W. Moore and John Bellamy Foster, ecopedagogues have cultivated a landscape of important transnational activism. We are now witnessing a profound demonstration of an efficacious integration of the social, educational and ecological justice movements. In opposition to capitalist discipline, as it contributes to the ongoing crisis, ecopedagogic practices can be organized into a sort of 'ecological discipline' (Fassbinder, 2008) which would bind people to the defense of diversities both ecosystemic and social as against capital's manipulation of them as people-commodities.

In this sense, *Occupy Education* (2012), a book by Tina Lynn Evans, is very much a critical pedagogy of convergence and integration bound together by ecological discipline, as the work of European sustainability scholars and activists is brought into dialogue with powerful emergent voices from *las Americas*, both to interrogate the rust-splotched and steampunk metropolises and tumbleweed hinterlands of neo-liberal capitalism and to work towards a vision of what a world outside of the menacing disciplines of neo-liberal capitalism might look like. Of course, 'occupy' means something else to indigenous peoples who have long fought imperial occupation. Nonetheless, the occupy movement was courageous insofar as it put questions of inequality and new 'social arcs' for utopia on the map for European/settler populations.

What initially strikes the reader as a key theme of Evans's project is the way she establishes the wider context of her point of departure, where place-based sustainability theory and action are applied to multiple contexts of practical lived experience – experience that has been inestimably impacted by neo-liberal capitalist globalization and sustained opposition to it. Evans's points of departure emerging from this context are the sufferings of the planetary oppressed, in the process leveraging progressive and radical theories of education, which she employs at risk of losing herself to the very system which she has been trying so valiantly to overcome. Evans rejects a reformist discourse and its hegemonic apparatuses and instead chooses to construct a pedagogy of sustainability that can be used as a strategic instrument for liberation, one that is education-oriented but nonetheless maintains a position of extraordinary political effectivity. Radical indigenous thinkers, like Linda Smith (1999), have, of course, long talked about the tensions between 'assimilation' into educational systems and the possibilities for radical pedagogies within formal educational systems.

The upshot of this is the creation of what Richard Kahn calls a 'counterhegemonic bloc of ideological alliance' among environmental educators, indigenous scholars, non-academic knowledge workers, and political activists of various and sundry stripe – or what Kahn in his own path-breaking work has called 'the ecopedagogy movement' (2010). Evans's work is built upon in-depth theories about the nature and purposes of sustainability itself, and Evans is acutely aware that the politics of sustainability is not a pitch-perfect love story and can easily be co-opted by the guardians of the state, who make empty promises to manage the crisis in the interests of the public good (really in the interests of private greed). The discourses of sustainability can be hijacked by the very interests that Evans is out to unmask (see, for example, Josee Johnston's 'Who Cares about the Commons?', which argues that 'sustainability has come to imply sustainable profits as much as 'saving the earth'' [2003, p. 1]).

Understanding how such hijacking takes place and how the imperial instinct remains alive and well among progressive educators, and comes with a fixed-rate and non-negotiable commitment to reform over revolution can be brilliantly assisted by engaging with the works of the decolonial school. Exponents of this school have charted out the conflictual terrain known as the 'coloniality of power' (*patrón de poder colonial*), and 'the Eurocentric pattern of colonial/capitalist power' (*el eurocentramiento del patrón colonial/capitalista de poder*) whose scholars and activists working in the areas of decolonizing epistemologies and praxis include Ramón Grosfoguel, Anibal Quijano, Linda Smith, Enrique Dussel, Sandy Grande and others.

In addition to addressing the coloniality of power, a revolutionary critical pedagogy of sustainability is as much about creating what Kahn calls a 'revitalized ecology of body/mind/spirit' and the struggle for 'planetarity' as it is a praxiological undertaking to achieve specific, cumulative goals (2010). Thus, for instance, Grosfoguel (2008), as well as Quijano, Dussel, and other 'decolonial' thinkers, suggests new approaches to ecology through viewing the dependent hierarchies of capitalism, spirituality, epistemology, jurisprudence and governance, patriarchy and imperialism as an entangled and co-constitutive power complex akin to a global ecology.

PJ: Reading your reply, I just cannot help but recall the very important body of work done by Ivan Illich. From *Deschooling Society* (1971) through *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) to *Medical Nemesis* (1982), Illich offered many innovative insights and strategies for decolonialization of the complex web of relationships between technologies, cultures, education and ecology. Therefore, Peter, what are the most important lessons we can take from Illich?

PM: While Illich's idea of deschooling is obviously based on a utopian image of human beings (an in-depth critique of Illich's educational ideas in the context of the contemporary Internet can be found in the book called *Wikiworld* (2010), co-authored by Juha Suoranta and Tere Vaden), his lasting legacy lies in his profound analyses of the relationships between the human race and its environment. Barry Sanders, co-author with Illich of *ABC: the alphabetization of the popular mind* (Sanders & Illich, 1989), shared the following story about Illich which has been described as follows by Richard Wall:

At one point during a talk in Maine, in the midst of Ivan describing his mistrust of electronic technology and in particular his terror of email, a young man leapt to his feet and shouted out, 'But, Mr Illich, don't you want to communicate with us?' Ivan immediately shouted back, 'No. I have absolutely no desire to communicate with you. You may not interact with me, nor do I wish to be downloaded by you. I should like very much to talk to you, to stare at the tip of your nose, to embrace you. But to communicate – for that I have no desire'. (Sanders & Illich, 1989)

Illich taught one to be fearless – on stage or in the audience. I would hate any kind of technophobia or dystopian imagination to destroy the fearlessness we need to move forward towards the future.

PJ: For now, we succinctly introduced your critical turn from postmodernism to Marxism, explored the changing modes of production in the network society, and briefly examined critical potentials of ecopedagogy. In order to systematize our thoughts we approached those issues in neat sequence, one by one – but their real nature is everything but neat and sequential. Scientific discourses do not separate social phenomena because of their nature, but because isolated problems represent small(er) chunks of our reality that are much easier to comprehend for average human beings. However, the dialectic nature of our reality always finds its way to the surface. In the field of research methodologies, it is reflected in the need to explore the relationships between technologies and society using various interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and even anti-disciplinary approaches (Jandrić & Boras, 2012). In everyday life, it is probably most notable in overarching, elusive yet unavoidable and inevitable concepts such as *digital cultures* (I am deliberately using plural in order to stress multiplicity of backgrounds, narratives and perspectives). What are the main features of the emerging digital cultures? What are their underlying values and ideologies? Paraphrasing Freire (2000), how do they relate to our reading of the word and our reading of the world?

PM: C.A. Bowers and I have had some spirited if not downright acrimonious debates over the decades, especially in relation to the work of Paulo Freire. At the same time I want to acknowledge the importance of some of his lucid observations about digital cultures (Bowers, 2014). First, it is absolutely essential that we understand the metaphorical nature of language, and that intelligence is not limited to what can be explained by scientific study of the neuro-networks of the human brain. Consciousness, as Gregory Bateson acknowledges, along with Bowers, includes the pathways of all unconscious mentation which includes those pathways that are automatic and repressed, neural and hormonal. Print-based cultural storage and thinking, which is relied upon by developers of technology, is not rationally based and objective but in fact impedes awareness of what is being communicated through the multiple pathways that differ from culture to culture.

Bowers is right about this and he worries that computer technology and the digitalized mismeasure of man will offer us a truncated notion of ecological intelligence. Computer technicians and scientists working on artificial intelligence sanctify data and information grounded in print-based cultural storage and thinking, and this reinforces surface knowledge, ignores tacit knowledge, and presents a false sense of objectivity, and ultimately misrepresents the relational and emergent information-intense pathways of both cultural and natural ecologies. Bowers is very convincing here. Digital communication reproduces the misconceptions encoded in the metaphorically layered language that is often taken for granted by digital technicians.

Computer scientists are using a languaging process based on print literacy that reproduces the myths and deep cultural assumptions that influence thinking and awareness – what is being championed are the myths of individualism and progress and what is being silenced is the need to conserve the cultural commons of non-Western cultures that are able to provide largely non-monetized systems of mutual support that rely less on exploiting the planet's natural resources. I

agree with Bowers' prescient understanding that you can't reduce culture, cultural knowledge systems and cultural ways of knowing to data and information – especially given the reliance of computer scientists on print, and given the fact that there exist six thousand languages in the world. Words are metaphors whose meanings are framed, as Bowers explains, by the analogues settled upon in previous eras. What craft knowledge and indigenous wisdom traditions have been lost and replaced by Western corporate vocabularies of profits, efficiency and competition.

There are linguistic and cultural differences that cannot be captured by artificial intelligence. We can't capture what lies beyond the surface of the interplay of individual/cultural/linguistic ecologies. Here we should listen carefully to Bowers' criticism of the root metaphors of Western knowledge systems and the effects they have on colonization of the life worlds of other cultural groups. The digital revolution has encoded dangerous assumptions about endless growth, individualism, and the deepening of the ecological crisis. Ecologically sustainable traditions need to be intergenerationally renewed. The traditions of civil liberties of the complex and non-monetized traditions of the cultural commons that are still viable within Western cultures must be preserved and the cultural commons of non-Western cultures that do not rely on the exploitation of natural resources need to be intergenerationally renewed. Computer technology is contributing to the ecological crisis as super-intelligent computers still rely on print-based cultural storage whose cultural assumptions have been shaped by root metaphors of Western ideas of progress and individualism. We need an earth-centred ecological intelligence. Critical pedagogy can join in such an effort.

PJ: Digital cultures (I am deliberately using plural in order to stress multiplicity of backgrounds, narratives and perspectives) have recently acquired a lot of attention from various researchers, such as Sian Bayne, Jeremy Knox, Hamish A. Macleod, Jen Ross, Christine Sinclair and others. During the past several years, they have become an intrinsic part of curricula at various schools and universities – since 2009, there is even a scientific journal called *Digital Culture and Education* (2013). In this mash-up of postmodernist talk about grand narratives, glorifications of technologies, various scepticisms and/or primitivisms, practical inquiry into the ways people use the Internet for this or that purpose, analyses of the relationships between the local and the global, changes in various human activities including but not limited to arts, commerce, government and education, it is easy to forget that digital cultures are strongly linked to their non-digital background – particularly regarding power relationships. Based on your extensive international experience, particularly in the Americas, can you link digital cultures with the distinctions between the global South and the global North, with globalization of capitalism and the archetypes of identity?

PM: It's very easy to be distracted by the digital world and culture while you are building a personal identity created in a digital context. It is clear how individuals want to be represented in that world, and some prefer to live in that world than engage in the real world. Recently I returned from teaching a course in popular education and critical pedagogy in Mexico, where we discussed the negative impact of narcocorridos – songs that romanticize the Mexican drug cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Juarez Cartel, the Knights Templar Cartel, the Tijuana Cartel, Los Zetas, Jalisco New Generation, Independent Cartel of Acapulco and La Barredora – on youth. It is part of a movement around music that developed in Culiacan but is now a major commercial business venture in Los Angeles called *El Movimiento Alterado*.

Here are the words to an outlaw ballad in the Norteno musical style, sung by Alfredo Rios, a song about a notorious drug kingpin.

We take care of El Mayo
Here no one betrays him...
We stay tough with AK-47s and bazookas at the neck
Chopping heads off as they come
We're bloody-thirsty crazy men
Who like to kill.

The songs glamorize torture, murder and decapitations. This particular song glorifies the Sinaloa cartel and its bosses, Ismael 'El Mayo' Zambada and Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman, and praises Manuel Torres, allegedly a top hit man for Zambada. At the end of 2011, the song has been

downloaded 5 million times and the accompanying video has been downloaded 13 million times (*USA Today*, 2011).

Banned on radio stations in parts of Mexico, narcocorridos are everywhere on the Internet. Twin brothers based in Burbank, California developed the *El Alterado* culture, which admires the Sinaloa cartel for their violent, murderous lifestyle. They won a Grammy award in 2008 for creating a singer who goes by the name of 'El Chapo de Sinaloa'. Drug trafficking and torture are being made socially acceptable. There have been roughly 40,000 drug war deaths since Mexican President Felipe Calderon started to launch a major offensive on cartels as he took office in 2006. One of my doctoral students in Mexico presented on *El Movimiento Alterado*. He interviewed a number of his 12-year-old students in Mexicali about why they loved to listen to the narcocorridos. Their answers were very similar:

Because we love violence.

We want to be able to torture people.

We want to grow up so we can kill people.

So there is an entire Internet culture on this. There are video games where you can rape women, you can kill effortlessly, where you can turn yourself into a super hero. So what is the appeal? Are you retreating into your unconscious and connecting with all the frustrations you feel about being just an ordinary bloke in real life? Will you be more prone to act violently to solve problems you might have in real life? To counter this music, we played political protest music, some very contemporary, such as that from Calle 13, a Puerto Rican band formed by two brothers, René Pérez Joglar, who goes by the name 'Residente', and Eduardo José Cabra Martínez, who calls himself 'Visitante', and their half-sister Ileana Cabra Joglar, aka 'PG-13'.

Anyway, I returned from Mexico and was walking around the train station and suddenly I was surrounded by superheros – Batman, Robin, Superman, the Flash, Wonder Woman, Wolverine, Zombies – as the city was hosting a comic book convention and what is called a 'nerd prom'. So I was thinking, where are the energies of these teens and young adults going? Do they think that by clicking on 'Like' in their Facebook exchanges they are participating in a revolution? The contrast between the discussions and work being done in Mexico and the invasion of the nerds in San Diego was striking. In Mexico, Internet culture based in Los Angeles was normalizing drug trafficking and brutal violence, while across the border in Gringolandia everybody was focused on the world of their superheroes. Capitalist consumer culture hijacks the archetypes of identity – and none of them are fighting capitalism. They might be fighting corrupt capitalists, but not capitalism as a system, as a structure of feeling, as social sin.

Critical Technological Consciousness for a New Humanity

PJ: Speaking of youth, Peter, we definitely should not take their ideas lightly – historically, youth movements have always been important agents of social change. Certain aspects of their struggle can be attributed to the universal clash of generations, while others might have some real potential to bring radical social transformations. In order to make a clear distinction between the eternal and the contemporary, between the basic human need to struggle against authority and the really important argument regarding the future of our society, between the battle to overtake positions of power and the principled struggle against positions of power, between the desperate fight against worldwide tyrants such as Saddam Hussein and the struggle for a better/more just/more democratic society, between genuine political change and mere replacement of one political mannequin with another, between real social development and digital Potemkin's villages, could you pinpoint some distinct features of contemporary youth movements which emerge from the context of the network society?

PM: Youth today are beginning to refuse the cult of individualism as an antidote to their loss of a sense of self, to their being situated as impersonal agents in a rationalized society that is highly competitive and achievement oriented and psychotherapeutically oriented. Contemporary youth do not feel themselves embedded in a living reality that will endure within years to come because youth are taught to concentrate on their personal status and well-being. They and their loved ones are not assured of protection from misery and oblivion. The 2011 student mobilization in Chile, the

activism of Nigerian youth at the Niger Delta crude oil flow station, the clenched-fist protests against the ruling establishments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the resistance to the austerity measures by the youth in Portugal, Spain, and especially Greece, the South African public students who struggle to secure basic teaching amenities, such as libraries, in their schools, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States – all of these are part of a growing culture of contestation with its roots buried in the past, and its arabesque of tendrils arcing towards the future, the result of grafting what is desirable from the past onto new practices of revolt.

In the plant-grafting process, when the vascular cambium tissues of the root stock and scion plants have been successfully inoscultated, the stem of the stock is pruned just above the newly grafted bud. But the joints formed as a result of the grafting process are not as strong as naturally formed joints. Social movements that have recognized their weak links with the past are not attempting to begin again from the beginning (as this is a constitutive impossibility), but are utilizing technological innovations never before imagined in the history of social movements to re-figure the ways in which student protest can be organized to resist the cooptation of the world capitalist aristocracy and to provide new networking potentialities for increasing the pressure on the sentinels of the transnational capitalist class.

The new youth movements have revealed that a decline in political activism among youth is not an inevitable fact of capitalist life or nor is youth political apathy evidence of a deep normality. However, youth are pulled in sometimes crazed and mostly inconclusive directions. The spectacle of neoliberal capitalism would have us believe that youth protest should be enlivened by constant stimulation of the senses and thus opposed to the course of daily routine of regulation and self-restraint. But protest does not always require youth to shift registers between the everyday and the culture of contestation because contestation can, in fact, be part of everyday praxis, such as in the world of hip-hop culture. Protests can erode our subsequent capacity to endure the strenuous demands of our daily life, which is, of course, a good thing, because they create a space of liminality where youth can cultivate contestation as an art form. Historical necessity does not grant these movements success in advance, nor does divine fiat. This question can only be answered inside the struggles themselves, and in terms of the commitment that youth have to the poor, the powerless, the disfavored and the aggrieved.

Ruling elites who wish to turn greed into an inalienable right are now more fearful than ever that democratic social movements driven by youth who were previously politically unwary might now spawn a revolutionary upsurge among the popular majorities. So they make demands for more democracy by our youth undemocratically by enforcing brutal austerity measures and ratcheting up a permanent war on terrorism.

PJ: What is the role of information and communication technologies in these developments?

PM: Imagine a grandmother has lost her grandson to lung disease. Her tears are rolling down the precipice of her sunken eyes like a bucketful of pearls. But when she passes the chemical factory responsible for her grandson's death, her tears shoot out of her eyes in great red molten sparks as if spewed from an ancient volcano buried deep in the sea of her grief. She can do little more at the moment than scream in a high pitched rage that arcs around the smokestacks that killed her grandson. But can she do more than cry tears of grief and rage?

She can mount a social media campaign against the factory. She can petition the government. She can become an environmental activist. She can enter the digital world of protest. I am not saying that social media is in itself ineffectual. But so many protests these days are by digital petition. It takes less than a minute to sign. They give us the feeling that we are doing something, that we are making a difference, that the world is not hopeless, that we can intervene. My concern is to form a coalition that organizes on the basis of class initiative, that cuts across race and ethnicity and sexuality, that directly confronts the rule of capital. Is this even possible in the digital age? Are we predestined for political fragmentation, for single-issue campaigns that bury struggles that are necessarily universal under a micropolitics of single issues antiseptically cleaved from relations of production?

PJ: Talking about social order, we must revisit contemporary transformations of the concept of the state. Sociologists such as Jan van Dijk and Manuel Castells repeatedly assert that global neoliberal

capitalism constantly diminishes its role in everyday affairs. At a phenomenological level, it seems commonly accepted that most traditional functions of the state have been transferred to transnational institutions such as WTO [World Trade Organization] and IMF [International Monetary Fund], corporations richer than many countries, and with increased individual responsibility for issues such as education and health. However, the left side of the political spectrum (McLaren, 2006; Standing, 2011, 2014) constantly emphasizes that the role of the state is as important as ever, and seeks to improve its functioning towards increasing social justice. Which concepts of the state are emerging from new social movements? How feasible are they?

PM: Youth resisters who assume the opinion that we live in the information age where we have a knowledge economy of 'immaterial labor', where productive capital and the working classes are becoming increasingly irrelevant to social transformation, and that the nation state is relatively powerless, are likely to adopt a 'civil societarian' position (Holst, 2002) and put their faith in new social movements – in the 'cognitariat' rather than the 'proletariat'. Many participants in the youth movements of today view the state as the 'social state' – here I shall borrow some terms from Tony Smith (2009) – where symbolic and moral philosophy is the systematic expression of the normative principles of the Keynesian welfare state. In other words, it is a version of the state that offers wage labor as the normative principles of modern society.

Some of the more conservative and even liberal-centrist participants in new social movements take a neoliberal state as the norm, which we could call the entrepreneurial state – in which generalized commodity production requires a world market and they follow Hayek's principle that capital's law of value (1948) in the abstract must be followed. Some of the new social movements look to create a new model of the state which could be called an 'activist state' that is based, in large part, on the work of Polanyi (2001), and includes methods of aggressive state intervention into its industrial policy. International capital still predominates in this model, and there will be an inevitable government and global trade dependence on international capital. Of course, those who govern the activist state desire to place government restrictions on its rules and regulations for attracting global investment capital. So there is a concerted attempt to lessen the worst and most exploitative aspects of the state. Then again, you have some left-liberal social movements who prefer the concept of the 'cosmopolitan state'. This model is largely derived from the work of Habermas (1970), where forms of global market governance can prevail that are intra-national rather than national; here there is a focus on the development of a global civil society.

Marxist and anarchist movements don't ascribe to any of these models as it is clear to them that it is impossible to manage democratically wage labor on a global scale by placing severe restrictions on global financial and derivative markets. After all, wage labor only appears to include an equal exchange.

PJ: Being fairly close to anarchist ideas myself, Peter, I am extremely interested in your last claim. Does that mean that Marxism and anarchism have finally overcome the Bakunin–Marx split from the First International? Can we expect reconciliation of the two political philosophies as the theoretical and practical base for creating a massive anti-capitalist front?

PM: As is well known, there are wide variants of anarchism that have been described in the literature under various names, such as individualist anarchism, which rejects all forms of organization; 'Black bloc'-style anarchism, which often engages in violent acts; anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian communism, which defend the interests of the working class and become involved in the class struggle; and 'primitivist' and green anarchism, which challenge capitalist society or seek to create alternatives to it. Marxists and anarchists both agree on the goal of a stateless society. Some Marxists stridently maintain that a Leninist-style revolutionary party is necessary to re-build society from its capitalist ashes, a strong collective, organizing force that goes beyond Bakunin's call during the First International for spontaneous organization of the masses.

I was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, or 'Wobblies', but felt that there needed to be a stronger emphasis on creating a philosophically driven praxis of liberation, and I have been drawn to the International Marxist-Humanist Organization (2013), which seeks to conceptualize forms of organization that escape an elitist vanguardism but which offer an organizing force towards developing a socialist alternative to capitalism. The challenge before us is

to build such an alternative that can gain hegemonic ascendancy in the minds of the popular majorities worldwide so that we can fight to bring such an alternative into being.

PJ: Could you briefly evaluate the social relevance of the new youth movements? Where do they take us, do they have enough power to bring real change?

PM: As they stand, social movements prepare us for the next step, rather than take us to a new space, mainly because we do not know the spatial transformations necessary to prepare us for an alternative to the law of value. They are preparing us to be reborn with a transmuted consciousness, and while they have seen the old vanguard as a hindrance to further social change, they are still wrestling with the forms of organization needed to transform a world stage-managed by a transnational capitalist class. These new social movements are the foreconscious of change, whereas what is needed is a change in the subconscious of the historical agent; that is, how do we gain an acceptance of the deep mind for the fact that we need to build a social universe outside of labor's value form? Or is this just some youthful, chiliastic dream-vision? Some aspects of our goal must remain unspecified, our path trackless, our cry soundless and our destination uncertain, or else we will fall into the trap of imposing a blueprint, or re-coding old formulae, but at the very least we have to attune ourselves to history's migratory urge to sublimate that which we negate and to move towards a world less populated by human suffering, exploitation and alienation. That much is known and that much must be accepted before we can build upon the vestiges of past struggles and move into an entirely new terrain of resistance and transformation.

The pent-up force of the unmet shadow that lurks in our consent to the prevailing ideology of the capitalist class has the potential to destroy the very form of our past struggles. New modes of organization are called for. The political imagination must be reconfigured to the challenges of the present. If we view the accumulation of capital and the production of nature as a dialectical unity, we need a new vision of the future that can break free from modernity's mega-strategies of revolution so that we can think of a socialist alternative to capitalism differently, not as some cataclysmic leap by which life advances, but rather as steps – some precarious and some bold – by which life is prepared to evolve. We must recover from our past what the past regarded as utopian and thus was rejected by our predecessors and offer new forms of rebellion that can better ensure that such knowledge will re-impact the present more effectively.

PJ: Having said that, Peter, you touched upon a very important matter: the relationship between information and power ...

PM: Of course I believe that information is power. We need to know how institutions operate, how people inside of them behave. This is crucial. We can learn, for instance, about war from all the valiant work of Julian Assange and his Wikileaks staff, and the efforts of Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning. We've learned about the deaths of thousands who otherwise would be relegated to the annals of ignominy, to abstractions that we can ignore because we can't picture them in ghastly and gory detail our minds. There is a lot of information out there – all communication relies on information, but I am concerned here about the providers. Who provides the information, how is it framed or 'punctuated' and what are the ideological effects? And how do human beings handle information? How do Americans cope, for instance, with the knowledge that their military has killed millions in its wars of aggression (which are disguised as preconditions for delivering 'democracy' by 'shock and awe' to those who won't play by our rules) and beaten them through our 'humanitarian imperialism' into submission until they become pliable client states? There is no country more than the USA who appreciates quisling nation states that willingly bend over for whoever is in power in the White House.

How do young people react to the notion that their country is involved in a 'forever war' against terrorism? Or with the knowledge that we could be saving millions of people by bringing them medical aid for what are known and treatable diseases – we have the technology to do that, but we don't. Capitalism creates such vast inequalities between groups within states and between states. Pollution from air, water, sanitation and hygiene is responsible for more deaths than disease in the developing world. The rich countries can afford to export their pollution to the peripheral countries. We know that our fellow human beings, our fellow planetary citizens, are being

poisoned by lead, toxic smoke from burning refuse in industrial dumps, from smoking cigarettes, from mercury, hexavalent chromium and pesticides which have become obsolete. After a while the death toll is just too much to bear but we can fast-forward all the messy details out of our consciousness through digital distractions. Our coping mechanisms involve surfing the television channels or the Internet; we don't have to stay in any one place for too long. Our anti-war efforts are really activated in the arena of cultural protest – through music, dress, plays, Internet sites – that are connected to rebelling against bourgeoisie society – as if war is just another feature of bourgeois society.

What I am concerned with is how war is connected to class structure, to capitalism itself, and I agree here with Garry Leech (2012) that capitalism itself is a type of war, a 'structural genocide' and it will take more than transgressions in the arena of culture to combat this genocide. All of us participate in this structural genocide as much by what we choose not to do, as by what actions we deliberately choose to take in our everyday lives. It is the concentration of capital within global corporations, their hegemonic control of the structures of ideological production through media, which largely makes this genocide possible, and, of course, the policies of international regulatory agencies. Even when we choose to resist, we find ourselves regulated in the way in which we are permitted to violate the rules – we are given a certain part of the public square where we can picket, chant slogans, and the like.

Postmodern anti-rationalism and anti-universalism from our avant-garde professoriate will not help us here. The struggle is up to us, to make sure we have a historical record that is truthful, and that we have safeguards in place so that corporations and government agencies cannot delete our national history. Because without memory, without collective history, education is impossible. Every educator should be involved in making history by struggling to make the world a better place by connecting their local concerns to larger global concerns – war, industrial pollution, human rights, freedom from constant surveillance. Now there is another issue here about historical records. Who owns our personal historical record? This generation's personal history is recorded in some form – who owns it? Whoever owns it can control us.

PJ: Your analysis kicks the nail in the head, Peter, and your last few sentences simply call for expansion. Nowadays, various gadgets and services collect enormous amounts of our personal data in exchange for 'personalized' services. For instance, my new phone is structurally unable to browse the Internet without knowing my age, occupation, gender and marital status; in return, I get restaurant recommendations based on my favourite foods and flight discounts based on my usual destinations. However convenient, these developments bring along elicited in-built ideological baggage which is painfully absent from our customer contracts. Whenever we subscribe to this or that digital service, a small part of our existence gets a digital life of its own. In the process, it moves out of our control – and returns as a control mechanism for our behaviour. What is the real price of our 'free' restaurant recommendations, flight discounts and heart monitors? Are we, like ancient American natives, giving away our best skins and gold in exchange for worthless glass pearls? What is the social role of metadata, and how does it relate to relations of consumption and production?

PM: As Evgeny Morozov wrote recently in *The Observer* (2014), our 'techno-Kafkaesque' world is being subject to algorithmic regulation through technological innovation and this will get exponentially worse in the coming years. Our daily activities will be monitored by sensors as part of the 'smartification' of everyday life. Google will soon mediate, monitor and report on everything we do. Procter & Gamble has created a Safeguard Germ Alarm that uses sensors to monitor the doors of toilet stalls in public washrooms. The alarm blares once you leave the stall and can only be stopped by the push of the soap-dispensing button. Morozov mentions that Google plans to expand the use of its Android operation system to include smart watches, smart cars, smart thermostats and more.

Smart mattresses that track your respiration and heart rates and how much you move at night and smart phones that measure how many steps you take each day, or tools that measure how much you spend as opposed to how much you earn (to fight tax fraud) and 'advances' such as remotely controlled cars that can be shut down from a distance if you are being pursued by the police – all of these will increasingly regulate your behavior. When Apple patented technology that deploys sensors in your smartphone that can block your texting feature if it is determined that you

are driving and talking on your phone, and when face recognition systems are made public to prevent your car from starting should it fail to recognize the face of the driver (and send the picture to the car's owner), we can rejoice or be wary. I am inclined to feel wary. The age of algorithmic regulation stipulates that we will be hived within a cybernetic feedback society in which the systems regulating our behavior maintain their stability by constantly learning and adapting themselves to changing circumstances. Morozov makes the important point that technologies that will detect credit-card fraud or tax fraud will do nothing to hinder super-rich families who write tax exemptions into law or who operate offshore schemes that funnel millions into their bank accounts. These technologies will always be evaded by the rich and powerful.

Morozov cites the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben who writes about the transformation of the idea of government. We have traditional hierarchical relations between causes and effects. We used to be governed by causes. Now this relationship has been inverted and we are governed by effects. This is emblematic of modernity, according to Agamben. If the government no longer wants to govern the causes but only manage the effects, then we are in for some difficult times. Don't try to find out the causes of diseases; try to keep yourself out of the healthcare system by being healthy. It's the insurance company model of algorithmic regulation, according to Morozov. If our heart rates and our blood pressure can be tracked as a means of proactive protection, will we be considered 'deviant' if we choose to refuse these devices? Will we be punished, in other words, with higher insurance premiums? In a cybernetically regulated world powered by the privatization agenda of Silicon Valley, if we fail to take adequate responsibility for our health, will we be punished? Will we be seen as failures if we fail to keep healthy?

Well, Morozov makes a good point when he says that this lets the fast food companies off the hook, nor does it address class based differences and questions of inequality. We all should be monitoring the condition of our feces and if we don't self-track sufficiently, then it is our fault if we get sick. Forget the exploitation of the food and pharmaceutical companies! This is what Morozov calls politics without politics – a politics identified with the 'nudging state' that relies on metadata. As correlating aggregate data on individuals becomes more sophisticated, data on individuals goes to the highest bidder, as our personal data become state assets. The algorithmic state is reputation-obsessed and entrepreneurial. One day, everybody will be their own brand, and nearly every key social interaction will be ranked. This leads to the culture of resilience in which it is agreed that we cannot prevent threats to our existence, so we must equip ourselves with the necessary savvy to face these threats individually.

So this world that Morozov describes blithely glances over or studiously avoids serious issues facing humanity such as economic equality and emancipation – all that is important in the cybernetic world of feedback mechanisms in real time is the creation of social homeostasis in a world of polished surfaces, aerosol politics and epidermal social relations of consumption. What is blurred and discounted are the social relations of production and how these relations are connected to the ongoing centralization of the control of the provenance of information. We are faced with an uncritical rehearsal of *Brave New World* (Huxley, 1932), and while the soma might taste good, all life is etherized inside the Internet Box.

PJ: Following recent technological developments in collection, storage and manipulation of digital information, we have landed into the age of 'big data' – and Huxley's *Brave New World* has indeed graduated from science fiction into the real life. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that various issues pertaining to big data provoke growing attention in diverse research communities from information science to education. (For instance, at the moment of writing this text, *Policy Futures in Education* has an open call for papers entitled "'Big Data' in Education and Learning Analytics" edited by Michael A. Peters, Robert Lingard, Tina Besley and Jillian Blackmore.) Could you please link big data to manipulation? What is the role of science in the struggle against the digital *Brave New World*?

PM: I am sure you are aware, Petar, that social scientists at Cornell University, the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Facebook have revealed the result of a controversial experiment (controversial because it was covert and relied on proprietary data), in an article entitled 'Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks' published online in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*

(Kramer et al, 2014). In their attempt to alter the emotions of 600,000 people, these scientists egregiously breached accepted ethical research standards in discovering, apparently, that emotions can spread among users of online social networks, which can be taken to mean that emotions expressed throughout online social networks (in this case in mood-laden texts) can influence or alter the moods of others (they did this via a Facebook-controlled ranking algorithm that regularly filters posts, stories and activities shared by friends).

It is still unclear if this experiment was funded by the US Army Research Office or some other branch of the US military. Even if it wasn't, learning how to manipulate how we act and feel in social networks such as Facebook obviously has powerful potential for military attempts to control large populations via the Internet, populations worldwide that are fed up with immiseration capitalism and being forced to comply with government austerity programs that hurt the poor and benefit the transnational capitalist class. Of course, an experiment determining whether 1.28 billion Facebook users could potentially be manipulated through 'massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks' (Kramer et al, 2014) is not simply a means of understanding what advertisements people are likely to respond to but is geared to shed scientific light on how to alter people's emotions so that they can be manipulated collectively.

When you sign up for Facebook you give a blanket consent to the company's research group to use you as a potential lab rat, as a condition of using the service, so the university researchers in this case obviously took advantage of the fine print to avoid requiring informed consent from the subjects involved. Apparently, however, in the case of the involvement of Cornell University, approval for the research was only given after the data collection had been completed. Because the responsibility for data collection and analysis was given over by the university researchers to Facebook, the academics involved were said to have 'not directly engaged in human research and that no review by the Cornell Human Research Protection Program was required' (Cornell University Media Relations Office, 2014). Does this mean academic researchers can also team up with any organization, including the US military, and escape ethical restrictions?

Everywhere you go today you are forced to consume information that has been tested in order to prompt you to contact certain companies, or purchase certain goods, or remember certain information. At airports, in some supermarkets, at some movie theaters, and on billboards. It's very hard to escape this saturation society. But being the target of deliberate emotional manipulation puts us more squarely into the suffocating world of *1984* (Orwell, 1949). We are already there. Have you ever had a dream, Petar, in which you are dreaming inside the dream? And then you awake from the dream in your dream, but when you are awake you are still in the dream. Advances in technology help us awake from the dream in the dream, but they do not help us to live outside of the dream, in the domain of wakefulness. Are the advances in technology worth it, when we no longer have the agency to create ourselves, but are merely flesh-like putty in the hands of the government and corporations? This is why critical pedagogy is so urgent today. Another world is possible and critical pedagogy can play a part in its creation. Yes, I believe in transcendence, and unlike Vattimo or Agamben, I don't believe that transcendence cuts off questions prematurely. We need a philosophy of praxis, a Marxist humanist pedagogy driven by the desire to live in a world of freely-associated labor where value production is no longer the motor of human existence.

PJ: What does it mean to reinvent ourselves in the age of the network? Could you please analyse the role of critical pedagogy in that process?

PM: I'm answering your questions now, Petar, from Ensenada, Mexico. Yesterday at Instituto McLaren de Pedagogia Critica, I was speaking to my students about the importance of being attentive to the deep cultural assumptions that provide the deep moral and conceptual frameworks for our pedagogies. I was sharing with them some of the important work of C.A. Bowers (2014), who argues that digital technologies cannot represent the tacit knowledge and cultural norms that represent the daily exchanges in people's everyday lives, knowledges that sustain the natural ecologies of diverse groups of people who inhabit our planet. How, for instance, are face-to-face mentoring relationships that have helped to create the educational commons being superseded by computer programs such as Blackboard and print-based storage systems and thinking that are so prominent in digital technologies? How does corporate-controlled media/digital culture promote a particular form of Western individualism dependent upon consumerism and, for instance, the

notion that economic development and growth is automatically a good thing – all of which can lead, of course, to further poverty and the loss of natural resources?

Naturally, it can lead to much more – to structural genocide, ecocide and epistemicide. Information and data do not amount to wisdom. Bowers cites the neo-social Darwinian and neoliberal perspectives of Hans Moravic and Ray Kurzweil who argue that digital technologies are at the point of displacing human beings in the process of evolution by way of self-correcting machine intelligence. Here, in Ensenada, I am thinking of the history of the Cochimies, the Pai-Pai, the Kumiai, the Kiliwa, the Cucapa, the Guayaira, the Pericues – what were the so-called great movements of progress that destroyed their cultural commons generations ago? And how many other pueblos originales will be destroyed in the future by the evolution of machine-intelligence?

Life Is Jerky

PJ: About half past three in the morning, during the peak period of our email exchange, I suddenly received the following email from Peter:

When people started to use the Internet, I told my friends, the Neighborhood has just become more interesting.

Sent from my iPhone

This sentence has served as inspiration for the first section of this article. More importantly, however, it provides a vivid example of Peter's *modus operandi*. We started this conversation in the most traditional way: I asked questions, and Peter provided answers. To my great surprise, after not more than a few emails, things have turned upside down. At times, Peter would indeed reply to my questions with full-text answers – just like any other interviewee. More often than not, however, he would merely send a link or two or attach an article to an empty email. Out of the blue, he would send a phrase or sentence seemingly unrelated to the last thing we had been discussing – at all times of day, and often from his phone. Sometimes I could almost feel sources of his inspiration – queuing in the supermarket, sipping coffee in his favourite café in Los Angeles, or talking to various people during his numerous travels.

Our relationship went much deeper than business. Emails have started to become fairly personal – yet they never completely lost focus. We talked about the general concept of humanity and about our love for our partners, about the changes in contemporary structure of employment and about our personal work experiences, about immigration laws and their consequences to our families. In this way, my inbox slowly acquired an interesting collection of stories that do not really belong to the standard academic discourse. Yet, I felt that it would be a shame to keep those stories private, so I decided to make this small collection of thoughts which do not represent Peter the scientist, or Peter the critical theorist, but primarily expose Peter's personal feelings about technologies. In the context of critical revolutionary praxis, after all, context is equally important as content – and one's theoretical views about information and communication technologies cannot be separated from one's needs and feelings.

PJ: If you got the time, Peter, I'd like to engage you in a wee thought experiment. Imagine two drawers. The first drawer contains all works of arts, music and literature – Shakespeare, Hemingway, London, Kerouac ... /Picasso, da Vinci, Michelangelo ... /Zappa, Mozart, the Rolling Stones ... you name it, it's there. The second drawer contains all scientific achievements – physics, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, history ... Which drawer, in your opinion, contains more knowledge about the world around us?

PM: I would choose the first drawer but would try to steal as much from the second drawer when nobody was looking. Actually, I have an interest in quantum theory.

PJ: You are obviously well acquainted with the Internet. Ages ago, I found your website with *Hasta Siempre* intro – very fashionable for its time. Now you've got the new design, though ... You also have profiles on various social networks such as Facebook and Academia.edu. Why motivates you for such a strong online presence?

PM: I have two webpages, both started by other folks, who volunteered to set me up. They are both interesting sites, one is in Spain developed by the brilliant Carlos Escano and the other by Richard Kahn and Greg Martin. Greg is a professor in Australia, while Richard is a professor in Los Angeles. But now it is run by Greg Misiaszek, who is also an academic. Occasionally I will post some talks I am giving or something I think readers who appreciate my work might be interested in. Now Facebook is another matter. I can't recall who set me up on Facebook, but I do post mostly visuals – posters, photos, and the occasional essay or political notice. I don't like corresponding on Facebook at all. I get a lot of messages and I just don't have the time to answer questions.

PJ: So, you don't really like social networking?

PM: Facebook promotes people's narcissism. I prefer email. I have a certain visual aesthetic I enjoy in posting photos. It's mostly a vehicle to promote political causes, that's the best part of it – I am sitting at a coffee shop in LA. People are ignoring their companions. They are obsessed with their phones and iPads. People are redundant.

PJ: You are an avid user of digital gadgets – as far as I am aware, more than half of this interview has been written on your smartphone. How do you feel about the tremendous assimilation of information and communication technologies into our daily lives?

(During our online conversation, Peter provided three different short stories about these developments. They share the same general message, but explore different angles and evoke different feelings. I do not feel that it would be right to publish only one of these stories and restrain readers from the pleasure of engaging with others. Therefore, I will merely list the three responses in reverse chronological order.)

PM: Story 1 (30 June 2014)

Today it was raining heavily in Jinhua, China. Black streaks were running down the cheeks of the buildings like mascara on mothers weeping for their lost children. I stopped by a water-logged restaurant that served countryside-style food, with a yearning for some Jiuqu Hongmei tea. After dinner, while I was admiring posters of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua Guofeng, I noticed about ten young waitresses in orange uniforms in the upstairs dining area. They were all sitting together in the dark, their faces eerily illuminated by their large Samsung cell phones. They were playing games and watching videos. All of them were silent. There was no dialogue. Occasionally a waitress would leave her chair to attend to a customer, and then it was back to the darkened room to the comfort of her cellphone. Outside the restaurant were unpainted concrete buildings and hydroelectric towers. They also stood silent.

PM: Story 2 (27 June 2014)

Recently I visited a thousand year-old Buddhist Temple in Hangzhou. Sacred figures from Buddhist history were carved out of stone. Gold painted statues of Buddha loomed over the visitors who were both pious and curious. In one temple at least a hundred monks were chanting in unison, as great clouds of incense wafted through the open doors. Winding my way down from the highest temple on the hill, I noticed one of the monks on his cellphone. Perhaps he was checking the World Cup results? Or calling his condo in Shanghai?

PM: Story 3 (25 May 2013)

I loathe technology, and yet, like many others, I am addicted to it. I hate cell phones, except for use in emergencies, yet I have an iPhone which I check regularly. I hate the Internet, yet I spend time on the web each day checking what I have found to be reliable sources and authors. I am irritated when people around me are talking loudly on their cell phones. I greatly dislike the consumer hype around cell phone cases, and the like. There is just too much information available. It is overwhelming. Everybody creates their own Internet worlds, publishes their own journals and blogs, and sometimes you find something of interest.

PJ: Could you please link these developments to the world of academia?

PM: I remember professors in academic institutions who publish their first few books, suddenly become celebrities among their students. They cultivate their image as social critics, shop carefully for their in-class sunglasses, black attire, and the men grow shadow beards. Their students have little knowledge about whether their professors' work is good or not but they have published some books, so their students treat them as academic celebrities. I feel it's a little bit like the film *American Psycho* (Harron, 2000), when so much fuss is made about business cards, the texture of the paper, the print, the color – it's all just image management. Academics get into their Internet worlds, advertise their work, and all of that.

PJ: Recent issue of the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* entitled 'Paulo and Nita: sharing life, love, and intellect' (2013) is dedicated to 'revolutionary love' and its power to challenge oppressive social relationships. Your paper in that issue, 'Reflections on Love and Revolution' (McLaren, 2013), shows that the concept of revolutionary love extends from the private sphere into important questions such as re-evaluation of the contemporary role of academics. However, Paulo and Nita Freire lived in the world of one-directional mass media such as television and newspapers. Could you please relate the concept of revolutionary love to information and communication technologies?

PM: I believe that love is a social relationship as opposed to an entirely private matter. I believe that love can be productive for the collective emancipation of people. One might think that technological innovations – the social media, for example – have enhanced the possibility of love expanding into the collective arena of social development. But the class interests embedded in the social media – i.e. the ideology of individual consumption, the commodification of subjectivities (especially the commodified individualism of neoliberal capital with its exclusive and singular morality), the exploitation of the social labor of others (the bourgeois treatment of people as commodities to be 'owned' or possessed which is increased by economic dependency and the social division of labor dominated by property relations) – have disabled the emancipatory potential of love and collective solidarity. Meeting the material needs of people – rather than treating people as 'stranded assets' useful only when they can be maximized for their purchasing power by an embrace of market fundamentalism – creates the necessary conditions of possibility for radical love and the solidarity needed to create a world unburdened by value creation, a world committed to freely associated individuals.

PJ: As far as I am aware, Joe Kincheloe dubbed you 'poet laureate of the educational left' (2000, p. ix). Your first book, *Cries from the Corridor* (reprinted and expanded in *Life in Schools* [McLaren, 2014]), is widely considered as a masterpiece of literature. In recent years, you started writing poetry (a few of your poems can be found in *MRZine* [2013]). Overall, your unique expression has had a strong influence on the success of your academic work (more about your relationship to writing can be found in the 2008 interview for the University of Waterloo [McLaren et al, 2008]). In this question, I am interested in the 'mechanics' of your writing. How do you write your poems? Do you use pen and paper, or type them on one of your gadgets? How do you write your articles? Do you do everything on screen, or print your articles and work on them in cafés? Why?

PM: Now as for writing – well, that's an interesting process. People approach me now about my idiosyncratic style, and that's something that they didn't do years ago, so maybe that's a sign that I am getting better. But I think people are starting to appreciate it more and more. My present style has to do with the writing I did in the 1960s, my affinity for the Beat Poets, encouragement I got from meeting Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and a lot of very creative people. When I write a paper, there are sections that are meant to be read. Then there are just sections that are meant to convey ideas. I am trying to bring a lot more young people into critical pedagogy, and they like the spoken-word sense of some of my paragraphs.

Sometimes I will rip pages out of magazines, shuffle them, and then just look for metaphors and strange combinations of words that have little to do with each other. I'm not sure who did the

same, I think perhaps William Burroughs. Some people don't like my work because they find it too self-conscious, as if I am trying too hard to be hip, that kind of thing. But that's how I look at the world, I try to bring a little of a lot of different historical selves into my work – artist, poet, activist, essayist, teacher, student, interlocutor – and writing really does depend on how you feel when you put pen to paper. Sometimes I feel more didactic than at other times. Sometimes more like somebody provoking an idea.

I write mostly on scraps of paper with a pen. Then I put them on the computer. Then back to the pen. And back to the computer, and so on. I just hate reading on the computer. I can't do it, even with a big screen. I have to print out drafts and read them on paper. They only make sense to me on paper. The screen is just part of the work process. And then, I need to read my work in page proofs, in the final typeface. Only then can I judge my work. And I am notorious for making last-minute changes in the page proofs. Always, always there are errors in the book or published essays. I always spot them and they always annoy me. There are few good copy editors any more – they have all been phased out by journals and publishers that want to pare down the publishing process.

PJ: I'm sure that our publishers will be delighted with your last-minute changes ... And what about your public talks? How are they related to your writing?

PM: I always hear my own voice when I read my work. I speak the words to myself. I think a lot of work comes to life when the right person is reading it. I enjoy reading my work at conferences because I wouldn't dream of giving a talk unless I felt I had something to say and the things I have to say I feel passionate about. I am not an academic. I don't care much for academic conventions or academic life. In fact, it's a brutal world. I put a lot of energy into my talks, and few people complain that I 'read my paper' instead of being spontaneous because they can see that I am very much emotionally invested in the causes that I write about. On occasion I like to break off from reading my paper and be extemporaneous. Now you might be asking: who cares? You are a revolutionary and you shouldn't really care about all the aesthetic details. Just get the message across. Write like a journalist in the most accessible style possible. I respect that type of journalism but I've never been able to sustain that kind of writing. I have given myself permission to be a stylist with the provision that style can never trump substance, and when it does, put away your pen!

PJ: With Carlos Escano, you made few videos about possibilities for social change such as *Sí se puede* (Yes it is possible) and a funny yet inspiring blend of technological reality and iconic images of Che Guevara called *Life is Jerky*. What is that all about? Another vehicle to promote political causes, a new way of expressing your ideas, or a mere creative streak?

PM: I was impressed with Carlos's videos where the image jerks around. I thought to myself: That's what it is like a lot of the time. There has been very little smooth sailing in my life. Life is jerky. It shifts around in fits and starts. It's like driving an old car that shakes and then falls apart. All that is left is you sitting on the seat. The rest of the car is in pieces lying all around you. I feel that the journey we call life is a lot like that. I can deal with the jerks, and being jerked around by people, by circumstances, by the technological changes that speed me up or slow me down, but sometimes I wish the road has less bumps. Of course my life has been filled with much personal trauma so the jerks usually don't seem so bad. But when you are jerking around, your imagination is more difficult to focus. So you need a reprieve. I get that in my writing or my creative work.

PJ: Now that we know what Peter the critical theorist thinks of the Internet, we have arrived at the obvious last question: how do you feel about the Internet?

PM: How do I personally feel about the Internet? I feel it is a tremendous source for cranial addiction. My invitations to contribute essays in journals and books used to arrive in the snail mail; you had around nine months to a year to produce a work. Invitations now come fast and furiously and editors expect you to put something together in less than three months. So it does affect the quality of the work in a negative way, but you are able to get your ideas out there in vaster quantities, which is a good thing if you believe that what you have to say is worthwhile in making

the world a better place. But you pay a price. It is more difficult to read books carefully, without being interrupted by the Internet, or rather, allowing the Internet to interrupt you. It is a ferocious distraction from things that need to be done. Cell phones take priority over conversations with family and friends. Once you unplug yourself, you enter a world where everyone else is plugged in. It's become a tool of psychological and image management. It's an alternate reality that entraps you and enables you to feel you are bonding with people in a special way when, in fact, you probably don't mean much to those with whom you are corresponding. For many students that I know, it has become a source for bullying, for deception. Just going through hundreds of email messages a day, to see which ones are relevant to your life, takes hours. I have often fantasized about just getting away from technology, and keeping a ham radio available in case I'm on a boat crossing the Atlantic and a storm is approaching and, say, my companions in the boat are a tiger, an orangutan, a zebra and a hyena ...

Note

Due to the large amount of gathered material, this conversation is published in two complementary parts. The other part of the conversation will be published in: P. McLaren & P. Jandrić (forthcoming, 2015) *The Critical Challenge of Networked Learning: using information technologies in the service of humanity*, in Petar Jandrić & Damir Boras (Eds) *Critical Learning in Digital Networks*. New York: Springer.

Sources and Acknowledgements

PJ: In order to provide a whole-rounded overview of the relationships between education and virtuality, this conversation inevitably contains elements of earlier works written by both authors. On my side, sporadic insights and descriptions, including but not limited to interpretation of the differences between the mass society and the network society, are loosely based on the recent book co-authored with Damir Boras, *Critical e-learning: struggle for power and meaning in the network society*, FF Press & The Polytechnic of Zagreb.

PM: Indeed, Petar, there is no point in reinventing the wheel. Built around the idea to collate a wide range of insights into the complex relationships between education and virtuality, parts of this conversation are adapted from several earlier works:

- Elements of my critique of postmodernism and the shift to Marxism have been taken from another conversation with Glen Rikowski published under the title 'Pedagogy for Revolution against Education for Capital: an e-dialogue on education in capitalism today', in *Cultural Logic*, 4(1) (McLaren & Rikowski, 2000).
- Analysis of 'the nuclear unconscious' is expanded and revised from my conversation with Glen Rikowski published in *Rage and Hope: interviews with Peter McLaren on war, imperialism, and critical pedagogy* (McLaren, 2006).
- Some comments on ecopedagogy are expanded and significantly revised from the preface written for *Occupy Education* by Tina Lynn Evans (2012). A version of this appeared under the title 'Objection Sustained: revolutionary pedagogical praxis as an occupying force' in *Policy Futures in Education*, 10(4) (2012). I want to thank Sam Fassbinder and Richard Kahn for their criticisms and suggestions, as well as anonymous reviewers. I especially want to thank Elaine Coburn, whose editorial insights and recommendations have proved of inestimable value in developing this work further.
- The overview of the relationships between contemporary youth social movements and information and communication technologies is expanded from an earlier interview with Sam Fassbinder published in *CounterPunch* magazine (McLaren & Fassbinder, 2013).

PM, PJ: We give our special thanks to Christine Sinclair for her invaluable insights and criticisms on this conversation.

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PETER McLAREN is Distinguished Professor in Critical Studies at Chapman University, USA, where he is Co-Director of the Paulo Freire Democratic Project. Professor McLaren is the author and editor of nearly 50 books and hundreds of professional publications on education and social justice. His writings have been translated into over 20 languages. One of Professor McLaren's recent awards includes the Outstanding Educator in America Award presented to him by the Association of Educators of Latin America and the Caribbean. *Correspondence:* peter.mclaren1@gmail.com

PETAR JANDRIC has a PhD and is Senior Lecturer in e-Learning at the Polytechnic of Zagreb, Croatia. He has worked at the Croatian Academic and Research Network, the National e-Science Centre at the University of Edinburgh, the Glasgow School of Art and the Cass School of Education at the University of East London. Petar has published extensively on inter-, trans- and anti-disciplinarity and on the relationships between critical education, technologies, arts and society. He is involved in various programme committees and advisory bodies, reviews for several journals, publishes popular science and regularly talks in front of diverse audiences. His recent publications include the book *Critical e-Learning: struggle for power and meaning in the network society* (2012) *Correspondence:* pjandric@tvz.hr